

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3668

EXDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, LE
SUBJECT: LATEST FIGHTING IN BEIRUT - AMBASSADOR'S MEETING
WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS

REF: BEIRUT 3667

1. PRESIDENT SARKIS CALLED AT 1800 JULY 1 AND ASKED ME
TO CALL IMMEDIATELY AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (WHICH IS 5 MINUTES
FROM MY RESIDENCE). DURING SUBSEQUENT MEETING, SARKIS SAID
HE IS IN AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION. ACCORDING TO SARKIS, THE
MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LATEST FIGHTING BETWEEN CHRISTIAN
MILITIA AND SYRIANS IS ELIAS HANNUSH, NLP MILITIA LEADER IN
EAST BEIRUT. IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE, SARKIS WAS HOPEFUL
THAT A CEASEFIRE COULD BE ARRANGED, BUT OVER TIME HIS PROBLEMS
LOOKED INSURMOUNTABLE. HE HAD BEEN CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE
BETWEEN ARMED PALESTINIANS AND CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND COULD
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NOT BRING SECURITY TO THE COUNTRY UNTIL THEY WERE BROUGHT UNDER
CONTROL. SARKIS THEN ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT HE COULD DO.

2. I REPLIED THAT PROBLEM WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND THERE WAS
NO EASY SOLUTION. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR SARKIS TO SUMMON
ALL LEBANESE LEADERS, TALK TO THEM FRANKLY AND SAY THAT EITHER
HE MUST HAVE THEIR COOPERATION OR HE WOULD RESIGN. SARKIS

REPLIED THAT THIS WOULD BE NOTHING EXCEPT PALAVER AND WOULD NOT CHANGE ANYONE'S BASIC ATTITUDE, BUT HE WOULD TRY IT ANYWAY.

3. I THEN ASKED SARKIS WHAT USG COULD DO TO HELP HIM. SARKIS REPLIED, YOU CAN TALK TO PEOPLE HERE AND TO THE ISRAELIS. SARKIS SAID THAT CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND PIERRE GEMAYEL WERE COOPERATING BUT THAT BECHIR GEMAYEL AND THE WAR COUNCIL OF THE PHALANGE HAD BEEN PROVOKING THE SYRIANS AND MUST BE CURBED. BECHIR AND HIS GROUP HAD NOT BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CURRENT FIGHTING, BUT EVEN IF PRESENT SITUATION COULD BE CALMED DOWN, FIGHTING WOULD BREAK OUT AGAIN UNLESS BECHIR WERE RESTRAINED. SARKIS ASKED THAT WE APPROACH THE ISRAELIS AND ASK THEM TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH BECHIR TO PERSUADE HIM TO CURB HIS PROVOCATIVE ACTIVITIES.

4. REGARDING PRESENT FIGHTING, SARKIS SAID THAT HE THOUGHT HE COULD PERSUADE THE SYRIANS TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT. (IN THIS CONNECTION, DANY CHAMOUN CALLED DATT AT APPROXIMATELY 1900 JULY 1 TO SAY THAT SYRIANS WERE SURROUNDING CHRISTIAN AREAS OF EAST BEIRUT USING ALL AVAILABLE TROOPS, AND HE VERY MUCH FEARED THERE WOULD BE SYRIAN ATTACK EITHER NIGHT OF JULY 1 OR MORNING OF JULY 2. SARKIS, DANY SAID, HAD CALLED DAMASCUS THREE TIMES BUT THERE WERE NO SIGNS THAT SYRIAN PRESSURE WAS EASING. DANY DID NOT KNOW WHAT USG COULD DO BUT THOUGHT WE SHOULD BE INFORMED.)

5. COMMENT: AS OF 2000 HOURS HEAVY BOMBARDMENT OF EAST BEIRUT IS CONTINUING. I RECOMMEND THAT DEPT CALL IN SYRIAN AMBASSADOR AND
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EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN OVER LOSS OF LIFE AND HUMAN SUFFERING THEIR ACTIONS HAVE CAUSED, ACTIONS THAT ARE OUT OF PROPORTION TO WHATEVER PROVOCATION THERE MAY HAVE BEEN. I ALSO URGE THAT DEPARTMENT INSTRUCT EMBASSY TEL AVIV TO MAKE APPROACH TO ISRAELIS AS REQUESTED BY PRESIDENT SARKIS.
PARKER

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